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## Junior Recital: Stephen Ahearn, clarinets, and Kristen Alexander, soprano

Department of Music, University of Richmond

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UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND  
DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC



JUNIOR RECITAL

Stephen Ahearn, clarinets  
Kristen Alexander, soprano

assisted by

Mark Graves, piano  
Chris Musialek, piano  
Suzanne Bunting, piano



FEBRUARY 26, 1999, 8 PM  
PERKINSON RECITAL HALL

## PROGRAM

### Concertino, op. 26

Carl Maria von Weber  
(1786-1826)

Stephen Ahearn

Mark Graves

During the 20 years prior to the Concertino's debut performance in 1811 the clarinet underwent substantial technical advances. The classical five-keyed instrument had been almost completely replaced by a nine-keyed version. When Weber met Heinrich Baermann, for whom the work was penned, Baermann was playing on a new ten-keyed clarinet. This instrument provided increased smoothness throughout the ranges, which Weber took full advantage of. When the Concertino was premiered in Munich it was so well received that the king immediately commissioned two full concertos. The work consists of a slow introduction, followed by the presentation of the theme and subsequent variations.

### If Music Be the Food of Love

Henry Purcell  
(1659-1695)

Kristen Alexander

Suzanne Bunting

Purcell is considered to be one of the greatest Baroque and English composers. The number of solo secular pieces he composed is astounding, totaling over 250. He is best known for his gift for expressive line writing. This is the first of three settings of this particular piece (published 1692). He often revised his work after it was published in order to perfect it. You may recognize the first line of this song from Shakespeare; however, the rest comes from a poem by H. Hevingham.

### I Attempt from Love's Sickness, from *The Indian Queen* Purcell

A popular favorite in Purcell's time, "I Attempt" is filled with examples of his genius in line writing. Some of the many in the song are: the bird-like movement on the word "fly" that colors the vocal line and the lack of symmetry in the rhythm (five bars plus seven bars in the refrain, five plus six and four plus six in the verses) that gives an uncontrollable movement to the song, while the fall at the end of each line adds a touch of hopelessness that reminds the listener of the vain attempt at escape from love's sickness.

## Music for A While, from *Oedipus*

Purcell

*Oedipus* was originally a play written by John Dryden and Nathaniel Lee. The play opened in September of 1678 and was one of the most celebrated dramas of its time. Unfortunately, there are no accurate records that tell us where in the play this piece was originally performed. The purpose of the song, in terms of the story line, is to summon the attention of the gods of the underworld long enough to divert them from the slain king Laius who is attempting to escape from their "eternal bands". This will allow him enough time to prove Euridice's innocence and proclaim Oedipus as his murderer. The ground bass represents the close confines of death; the chromatics represent the spirits wandering up from the underworld. As the piece progresses, Alecto, one of the furies, releases Laius, but the "drop" in the voice at the end of the piece reminds us that his release is not permanent.

## What Can We Poor Females Do

Purcell

Purcell's music was very bold in comparison to his predecessors. Though his works may often seem quaint, he was very direct and deliberate with what he wanted to say. Progressions were very important to his writing, as were irregularly resolved suspensions which we experience here at the end of the opening line. This type of suspension is thought to be closely associated with the development of basso continuo, because the suspension was irregularly resolved, and therefore the accompanist had to supply the missing note. In this song, the girl is so overwhelmed by all of her pressing suitors that she doesn't know what to do. Neither complying with or denying their offers seems to be the better choice, so she is forced to live with the suffering.

## Hillandale Waltzes

Victor Babin

1908-1972

### Theme

- I. Valse élégante
- II. Valse passionné
- III. Valse sombre
- IV. Valse volante
- V. Valse triste
- VI. Valse da bonne humeur
- VII. Valse brillante et joueuse
- VIII. Valse oubliée

Stephen Ahearn

Chris Musialek

Babin was born in Russia and immigrated to the United States in 1937. He is best known for his duo-piano performances and recordings with Vita Vronsky, whom he married in 1933. *Hillandale Waltzes* consists of eight movements composed on a theme by Johann Hummel. The opening movement is a presentation of this theme, followed by the eight variations which explore the emotional possibilities of Hummel's original work.

## Five Greek Folk Songs

Maurice Ravel

(1875-1937)

Kristen Alexander

Suzanne Bunting

The creation of *Five Greek Folk Songs* can be traced to a lecture given by French musicologist Pierre Aubry on the songs of oppressed peoples (Greeks). He asked M.D. Calvocoressi, a friend of Ravel, to find him songs that would fit his purpose and in turn, Calvocoressi chose the five Greek folk songs that will be performed here, along with two other pieces that never made it to the stage. At this point, though, the songs had no accompaniment, so Calvocoressi asked Ravel to compose piano accompaniment for them. Folk song was not one of Ravel's major preoccupations, but at the request of his friend, he consented and completed the task in an astonishing 36 hours.

### Chanson de la mariée (Song for the bride)

The original title to this piece is "Réveil de la mariée", meaning "Awakening of the Bride". Why the name was changed is unknown. The song is built on the natural minor scale of G. However, Ravel hardly lets a G-minor triad appear in the piece, never giving the listener a solid feel for the harmony. The effect that results from this is that of a soft, distant background sound of bells. The repetitive eighth notes on lines such as "Réveille toi!" (Wake up!) give the music

a sense of urgency to awaken to the beautiful day. The piano supports this excited urgency with the 16th note triplets played in large leaps. The excitement finally culminates when the proposal of marriage is made, ensuring the bond between the two families.

Là-bas, vers l'église (Over there, towards the church)

The trance-like feel to this piece is created from the open chords in the piano and the constant repetition of the vocal motifs. Written in the Phrygian mode, starting on a G-sharp, the "minor" sound to this piece is thrown off by the half-step motion to the A natural at the end of each line. Each of these five songs possesses a dance-like quality. This particular dance is in two, interrupted with an occasional three, making it more difficult to keep the strict rhythms in mind without forgetting to feel the dance in it.

Quel galant m'est comparable? (What dandy can compare with me?)

This bright, self-assured piece is narrated by an over-confident male proclaiming his worth and his love of, and for, his beloved. Exemplifying his confidence, the man begins a cappella, joined by the piano after the first proclamation of his greatness. As he speaks of his pistol and saber, the piano introduces rolled chords which add the missing F# to the G-major scale. This gives new color to the vocal line, allowing the man to move from speaking of himself to speaking of his need for the one whom he truly loves.

Chanson de cueilleuses de lentisques (Song of the gatherers of the pistachios)

The alternation between the use of a D-sharp and D-natural are key to the haunting vocal line. The piano line contributes to this flow with open chords and its sound of distant bells. The text of the song suggests it is being sung by a group of women, but perhaps it is sung by only one woman speaking for all about love existing between two people. The cry at the end shows her helplessness against the overwhelming love she feels.

Tout gai! (All gay!)

The idea of the song is conveyed well through its title. Unlike the first four songs, there are no complex key changes and lines. The piano part adds the only complexity with its difficult, whirlwind line. This line gives the sense of everyone twirling around during the wedding dance.

## Three pieces for clarinet solo

Igor Stravinsky

Piece No. 1 *Sempre p e molto tranquillo*

(1882-1971)

Piece No. II

Piece No. III

Stephen Ahearn

Stravinsky's *Three Pieces* were written for and dedicated to amateur clarinetist Werner Reinhart in 1919. Reinhart had been the sole financial supporter of Stravinsky's *L'Histoire d'un Soldat*. The three short pieces were one of the first attempts at creating a melodic line free of any supporting harmonic structure. At the same time, the pieces represent a complete rejection of typically Romantic concepts of phrasing. Stravinsky completes his musical paradox by voicing the original approach on the clarinet, one of the Romantic's favorite instruments.

The work grows from the slow, contemplative first movement with frequently changing and irregular meters. The second more active movement springs from this, with a greater range and no metrical markings whatsoever. The frantic percussive third piece concludes the work, also with irregular and ever changing meters.

## Der Hirt auf dem Felsen

Franz Schubert

(1797-1828)

Kristen Alexander

Suzanne Bunting

*Shepherd on the Rock* is believed to be Schubert's last composition and was not published until after his death in 1828. The piece was composed for soprano Pauline Anna-Milder Hauptmann. She asked Schubert to compose a concert aria for her that would allow her to express many different feelings and would be suitable for a large audience. As a result this work is more like an operatic aria than Schubert's typical lieder.